

18/12/00 New rescue move for at-risk factory

A BUSINESSMAN whose offer to buy the crumbling Hill Paul building at Stroud has so far failed, has come up with a new way it might be saved.

David Crownshaw, of Nailsworth, who was told his £200,000 bid for the old factory was "not even half way there", has now suggested the property might be turned into some sort of quality arts gallery and cafe bar.

Mr Crownshaw, whose company Snow Business makes artificial snow for the film and TV industry, said he made a verbal offer for the derelict Hill Paul building when he met its owners Harper Homes last week.

But his offer of £200,000 – more than the old factory was on the market for three years ago when it was in better condition – was rejected.

"They said it isn't even half way there," said Mr Crownshaw. "Since then the conservation society has had a finger in the pie and I might well be prepared to put some money into it. If there were 20 people who were interested at say £50,000 each, you

by Jo Barber

have a million, enough to do it up and turn it into something."

Meanwhile Mr Crownshaw was hoping to relocate Snow Business at another mill complex in the Stroud area instead of at Hill Paul.

The old factory has caused controversy in Stroud because conservationists believe it is a landmark and part of the town's industrial heritage.

Although Harper Homes, who have argued the building has become unsafe, recently gained permission from planners at Stroud District Council to knock it down.

But that caused an outcry and prompted the launch of the Hill Paul Regeneration Group which now plans a public meeting at the end of next month.

■ Stroud District Council's cabinet will discuss next month a suggestion that a "learning exercise" be undertaken into the history of Hill Paul, with the idea of developing a policy to audit such listed or conservation area buildings.